

Message Text

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SUBJ: PROTECTIVE CONSULAR SERVICES

REFS: A. STATE 189686; B. STATE 194251

1. THE EMBASSY STAFF AND I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE PRIME IMPORTANCE OF PERFORMING PROTECTIVE CONSULAR SERVICES IN A MANNER THAT REFLECTS CREDIT ON THE DEPARTMENT AND THE FOREIGN SERVICE. PURSUANT TO REFTEL A, I HAVE REVIEWED WITH THE CHIEF OF THE CONSULAR SECTION OUR PROTECTIVE ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES. I AM CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE BEING CARRIED OUT IN AN EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIVE MANNER. I INTEND, HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE SERVICES ARE BEING PERFORMED. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE EMBASSY'S CURRENT WORK IN THIS FIELD, WITH SUMMARY DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME OF OUR MAJOR RECENT CASES, FOLLOWS:

2. WE HAVE A BILATERAL CONSULAR TREATY WITH SINGAPORE WHICH HAS PROVEN TO BE OPERATIONALLY VERY EFFECTIVE. THE EMBASSY IS PROMPTLY NOTIFIED OF ARRESTS, CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE PERMITTED IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO DETAINED AMERICANS, AND THIS HAS PERMITTED THE CONSULAR SECTION TO ACT PROMPTLY AND EFFECTIVELY IN SUCH INSTANCES. DETAINEES ARE IMMEDIATELY VISITED BY A CONSULAR OFFICER, MADE AWARE OF THE SERVICES WE CAN OFFER (AS WELL AS THE LIMITATIONS ON WHAT WE CAN DO) AND GIVEN A SYMPATHETIC
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EAR.

3. ARRESTS OF AMERICANS IN SINGAPORE HAVE BEEN FEW, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SPRING OF 1976 WHEN 33 TEENAGERS FROM THE AMERICAN SCHOOL WERE ARRESTED FOR NARCOTICS VIOLATIONS. THE CONSULAR SECTION REACTED MOST EFFECTIVELY TO THE SITUATION ARISING FROM THESE ARRESTS. DISTRAUGHT PARENTS AND UPSET CHILDREN

WERE HANDLED WITH COMPASSION (I PERSONALLY MET WITH SOME OF THE PARENTS TO ASSURE THEM OF OUR CONCERN). THE EMBASSY REMONSTRATED VIGOROUSLY AT THE SOMEWHAT HEAVY-HANDED PROCEDURES INITIALLY FOLLOWED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AND THE SENIOR CONSULAR OFFICER SPENT MANY HOURS DISCUSSING THE MATTER WITH SINGAPOREAN OFFICIALS. GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WERE DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE EMBASSY'S CONSULAR SECTION AND THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES, AND THE JUVENILE OFFENDERS WERE DEALT WITH LENIENTLY: FINED AND, IN SOME CASES, DEPRIVED OF PERMISSION TO CONTINUE RESIDING IN SINGAPORE. HAD THEY BEEN SINGAPORE CITIZENS, THEIR PUNISHMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY MORE SEVERE.

4. OTHER ARREST CASES HAVE INVOLVED DETENTION FOR OVERSTAYING IMMIGRATION PERMITS AND MINOR MISDEMEANORS, PLUS ONE CASE OF MANSLAUGHTER FOR WHICH A NINE-MONTH SENTENCE WAS IMPOSED. IN ALL CASES CONSULAR OFFICERS RESPONDED PROMPTLY TO THE NEEDS OF ARRESTED AMERICANS, ATTENDED COURT TRIALS AND PROVIDED VALUABLE LIAISON BETWEEN THE PRISONERS' RELATIVES AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES. AT THIS MOMENT THERE ARE NO AMERICANS UNDER DETENTION IN SINGAPORE.

5. WELFARE AND WHEREABOUTS CASES ARE GIVEN PRIORITY TREATMENT. THE EMBASSY HANDLED APPROXIMATELY 90 SUCH CASES LAST YEAR, RANGING FROM THE SON WHO DIDN'T WRITE HOME TO A WOMAN WHO NEEDED MEDICAL EVACUATION DUE TO A BRAIN TUMOR. AMONG THE MORE DIFFICULT ONES WAS THAT OF AN AMNESIA VICTIM WITH NO FUNDS WHO

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WAS ALSO FOUND TO BE SCHIZOPHRENIC, AND WHOM WE EVENTUALLY ARRANGED TO HAVE FLOWN HOME ACCOMPANIED BY A LOCAL DOCTOR. THE CONSULAR SECTION'S HANDLING OF THESE CASES HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE AND COMPASSIONATE, ATTESTED TO BY A SHEAF OF COMMENDATORY LETTERS FROM GRATEFUL AMERICANS. WE HAVE ALSO BENEFITTED FROM THE FACT THAT THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT IS EFFICIENT, APPROACHABLE AND GENERALLY COOPERATIVE IN THESE MATTERS.

6. BECAUSE OF SINGAPORE'S CENTRAL LOCATION, WE OFTEN RECEIVE REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE CONSULAR DISTRICT. AS ONE RECENT EXAMPLE, A YOUNG WOMAN INVOLVED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT IN JOHORE, MALAYSIA, WAS BROUGHT INTO SINGAPORE FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT OF MULTIPLE FRACTURES THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE OF OUR CONSULAR PERSONNEL. IN SUCH CASES AND IN THE CASE OF AMERICAN TOURISTS SUDDENLY TAKEN ILL, THE CONSULAR SECTION MAKES EVERY EFFORT TO SEE THAT PROPER TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE TO THEM. HOSPITAL VISITS ARE MADE TO HELP MORALE.

7. WITH REGARD TO REFTEL B, THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT CUSTOMARILY TREATS AMERICANS AND CERTAIN OTHER FOREIGNERS DISTINCTLY MORE LENIENTLY THAN IT DOES ITS OWN CITIZENS IN THE CASE OF ARRESTS FOR PETTY NARCOTICS OFFENSES AND FOR MINOR NON-DRUG

OFFENSES AS WELL. FINES AND, IF WARRANTED, DEPORTATION OR EXPULSION RATHER THAN PRISON SENTENCES ARE NORMAL. IN THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE, AN ENLISTED MAN FROM A VISITING US NAVAL VESSEL WAS APPREHENDED BY THE POLICE WHILE ATTEMPTING TO BUY A QUANTITY OF MARIJUANA. AFTER A FEW HOURS IN DETENTION WHILE THE CASE WAS BEING INVESTIGATED, HE WAS DELIVERED TO HIS SHIP AND SAILED WITH IT. NO CHARGES WERE FILED, THOUGH THE SINGAPORE AUTHORITIES HAVE ASKED FOR A FILL-IN ON DISPOSITION OF THIS CASE BY THE U.S. NAVY.

8. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT APPROPRIATE TO RAISE WITH SINGAPORE AUTHORITIES THE QUESTION OF LENIENT TREATMENT FOR AMERICAN CITIZENS ARRESTED ON MINOR DRUG-RELATED OR OTHER OFFENSES. WE WOULD IN EFFECT BE ASKING THE SINGAPOREANS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO DO WHAT, BY AND LARGE, THEY ALREADY DO. BEYOND THAT, WE WOULD NOT WANT THE IMPRESSION TO BE CREATED AMONG TRAVELLING AMERICANS THAT SINGAPORE IS AN "EASY" CITY AND THAT THEY NEED NOT WORRY ABOUT PUNISHMENT FOR MINOR OFFENSES. THE FACT IS THAT SINGAPOREAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUDICIAL OFFICIALS DEAL QUITE STRICTLY WITH THEIR OWN CITIZENS ALTHOUGH NORMALLY WITH FULL RESPECT FOR PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS) IN PUNISHING INFRINGEMENTS OF THE LAW. THEIR CUSTOMARY LENIENCY TOWARD AMERICANS REFLECTS THEIR DESIRE FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE US, THEIR RECOGNITION OF THE SPECIAL COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH FOREIGNERS, THEIR INTEREST IN AVOIDING ACTS THAT MIGHT ADVERSELY EFFECT THE TOURIST TRADE, THE FACT THAT TO DATE THERE HAVE BEEN VERY FEW AMERICAN OFFENDERS, AND TO SOME EXTENT THE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BETWEEN SINGAPOREAN AND US OFFICIALS. THIS PICTURE COULD OF COURSE CHANGE GREATLY IF THERE WERE A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN VISITORS ABUSING SINGAPORE'S HOSPITALITY AND VIOLATING ITS LAWS. HOLDRIDGE

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